

Portland, Ore. - Congressmen Greg Walden (R-Ore.) and Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) emerged from the Mt. Hood National Forest late Thursday afternoon, having successfully completed their 41-mile hike around Mt. Hood. They began their hike early Monday morning.

"Spending four days on the Timberline Trail has helped us better understand the challenges Mt. Hood faces," Blumenauer stated. "Besides getting a firsthand look at our mountain, we spent more than 30 hours in meetings on the move with a variety of knowledgeable people along the way, who were willing to share information and perspectives on the mountain's forests, geology, hydrology, history, spiritual significance, and users."

"Mt. Hood is one of Oregon's most diverse treasures and the issues we face in managing its long-term health and vitality are as equally varied," Walden said. "This hike was immensely valuable, affording us the opportunity to learn and understand even more as we move forward with legislation. I appreciate all of the experts who volunteered their time to join Congressman Blumenauer and me this week."

Blumenauer said, "For all the work we have done over the last two-and-a-half years, this was the single most important effort to bring the pieces together and understand the context, making the issues surrounding Mt. Hood real."

In addition to their focus on the mountain, there were many opportunities to compare political war stories and exchange reminiscences on the trail. Walden and Blumenauer have a long personal history: Walden's father, the late Paul Walden, was a distinguished member of the Oregon House of Representatives in the 1970's. Blumenauer was first elected to the Oregon Legislature in 1972, where he served with Paul Walden on the House Revenue Committee. Congressman Walden also served in the Oregon House and Senate, as well being on the staff of Congressman Denny Smith before being elected to Congress himself in 1998.

When Congress reconvenes after Labor Day, Blumenauer and Walden will resume their weekly meetings on Mt. Hood and start drafting specific proposals and legislation that they will present to Oregonians this fall.